

S-306
Arcade Theater
Crisfield
Public

c. 1930

The Arcade Theater is a prominent building that marks the center of Crisfield's "uptown" commercial district. Standing on the southwest corner of the intersection of West Main and 4th Streets, the three-story, yellow brick theater was erected shortly after the devastating 1928 fire that destroyed much of Crisfield's business district. The fire was reported to have begun in the Crisfield Opera House, which occupied the same site as the theater. At the time of the fire, the opera house was filled with an audience viewing the 8:30 P.M. show of "Love," starring John Gilbert and Greta Garbo.

Built a few years after the fire, the yellow brick theater was assembled with a combination of materials that included concrete block walls, structural steel reinforcement, a brick veneered exterior highlighted with cast concrete ornament, and pressed metal ceilings inside. The theater displays an eclectic mixture early early twentieth revivalist design. The Art Deco influence is seen in the clear verticality of the West Main Street elevation, which is divided into three distinct bays. Four plain brick pilasters rise to a stepped parapet wall topped by cast concrete ball finials. Enhancing the verticality of the design are long decorative brick panels accented with reddish-brown brick and cast concrete corner blocks. The ogee-shaped second floor window arch points to an additional influence stemming from the architecture of the Mid-East. Inside the theater, several ceilings of pressed metals feature classical motifs, and the stage is framed by decorated pilasters and an enriched entablature.

Replacing the burned opera house, the Arcade Theater assumed a prominent position in the social life of Crisfield with weekly movies and stage entertainment. In fact the theater, along with the United States Post office across the street, were two major building projects that marked the end of Crisfield's most prosperous period, which had begun with the enormous oyster harvests of the 1880s and 1890s.

During the past ten years the building has fallen into a serious state of deterioration with the brick veneer starting to fall away from the concrete block structure. Major holes in the roof have permitted much water damage to floors and ceilings, and the main viewing room floor has partially collapsed.

HISTORIC CONTEXT INFORMATION

Resource Name: ARCADE THEATER

MHT Inventory Number: S-306

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA:

- 1) Historic Period Theme(s): ARCHITECTURE
- 2) Geographic Orientation: Eastern Shore
- 3) Chronological/Development Period(s):
Modern 1930-Present
- 4) Resource Type(s): Theater

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF
HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Survey No. S-306

Magi No.

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic ARCADE THEATER

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 403 West Main Street ☐ not for publication

city, town Crisfield ☐ vicinity of congressional district First

state Maryland county Somerset

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: none

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name City of Crisfield

street & number P. O. Box 270 telephone no.: 410-968-1333

city, town Crisfield state and zip code MD 21817

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Clerk of Court of Somerset County liber

street & number Somerset County Courthouse folio

city, town Princess Anne state MD 21853

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties

date 1985 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Maryland Historical Trust

city, town Crownsville state MD 21032

7. Description

Survey No. S-306

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date of move _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The Arcade Theater stands on the southwest corner of the intersection of West Main and 4th streets in the center of the "uptown" commercial district in Crisfield, Somerset County, Maryland. The three-story, yellow-brick theater faces north.

The stretcher bond brick and concrete block theater is divided into three sections. Fronting West Main Street is the principal elevation of the three-story, yellow brick main block, measuring 59'9" across, while the 4th Street elevation measures 61'5" deep. Attached to the back of the main yellow brick block, is a narrow red brick section that houses the actual theater viewing room with ramped seating and an elevated performance stage. The third distinct section is a series of single-story commercial shopfronts that line the 4th Street facade of the rear theater structure. The entire building is covered with low pitched or nearly flat roofs disguised behind low parapet walls.

The north (main) elevation is a symmetrically balanced facade, however the first floor commercial front has been altered. A wood shingled eave has been added above display windows on both sides of a twin door entrance. Still intact is the metal theater awning that shelters the entrance. It is held up by heavy iron cables attached to the wall. Fixed above the awning is a metal sign with vertical lettering spelling out "ARCADE." The second and third floors are divided into three distinct bays by four plain pilasters that rise the full three stories. The second floor fenestration consists of a center four-part window topped by an Islamic-shaped arch. The entire window is bordered by a band of dark liver-colored brick, while the pointed arch is highlighted by lighter colored brick. Directly below the center second floor window opening is a decorative cast concrete arch with comma-shaped sides that curve upward to visually support a keystone-shaped block. The flanking right and left bays are wider than the center bay, and each flanking bay is marked by a three-part, multi-pane sash window accented with dark, liver-colored brick. To the side of each window opening is a decorative rectangular panel executed in the same dark red-brown brick with cast concrete corner blocks. The third floor is distinguished by the name "ARCADE" set in light colored cast concrete within the center bay, and to each side are paired three-over-one sash windows bordered by dark red brick. The liver-colored brick is also used as an accent along the top of the building beneath the cast concrete capping.

The west side wall of the Arcade Theater is largely covered by an adjacent commercial structure, while the east side is marked by an asymmetrical arrangement of paired and single multi-pane sash windows. The dark red brick is used as brick banding at the second floor level and as window lintel highlights. A side entrance, covered by a small wood shingle hood, is located in the southeastern corner.

(continued)

8. Significance

Survey No. S-306

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The Arcade Theater is a prominent building that marks the center of Crisfield's "uptown" commercial district. Standing on the southwest corner of the intersection of West Main and 4th Streets, the three-story, yellow brick theater was erected shortly after the devastating 1928 fire that destroyed much of Crisfield's business district. The fire was reported to have begun in the Crisfield Opera House, which occupied the same site as the theater. At the time of the fire, the opera house was filled with an audience viewing the 8:30 P.M. show of "Love," starring John Gilbert and Greta Garbo.

Built a few years after the fire, the yellow brick theater was assembled with a combination of materials that included concrete block walls, structural steel reinforcement, a brick veneered exterior highlighted with cast concrete ornament, and pressed metal ceilings inside. The theater displays an eclectic mixture early early twentieth revivalist design. The Art Deco influence is seen in the clear verticality of the West Main Street elevation, which is divided into three distinct bays. Four plain brick pilasters rise to a stepped parapet wall topped by cast concrete ball finials. Enhancing the verticality of the design are long decorative brick panels accented with reddish-brown brick and cast concrete corner blocks. The ogee-shaped second floor window arch points to an additional influence stemming from the architecture of the Mid-East. Inside the theater, several ceilings of pressed metals feature classical motifs, and the stage is framed by decorated pilasters and an enriched entablature.

Replacing the burned opera house, the Arcade Theater assumed a prominent position in the social life of Crisfield with weekly movies and stage entertainment. In fact the theater, along with the United States Post office across the street, were two major building projects that marked the end of Crisfield's most prosperous period, which had begun with the enormous oyster harvests of the 1880s and 1890s.

During the past ten years the building has fallen into a serious state of deterioration with the brick veneer starting to fall away from the concrete block structure. Major holes in the roof have permitted much water damage to floors and ceilings, and the main viewing room floor has partially collapsed.

DESCRIPTION, Continued
ARCADE THEATER
Crisfield, Somerset County, Maryland

Extending southward from the front block is the narrow and plainly finished brick section that contains the viewing room and stage. As is common with a working theater built with a performance stage, the end of the theater portion extends a full story higher than the rest of the structure so that stage sets and miscellaneous back drop curtains could be hoisted out of audience view. The first floor of the east side is marked by a row of single-story, one-room plan shops distinguished by stepped parapet front walls that disguise flat roofs. The south and west walls of the theater wing are unadorned plain brick surfaces.

The interior has deteriorated significantly. Water has poured through the building with the failure of the roof, and portions of the original woodwork and interior finish have been either removed or covered over. The first floor is comprised of a ramped center passage flanked by long rectangular, ante-rooms. Modern sheet paneling and drop ceilings have been added to these rooms. Above the dropped acoustical tiles in the east room is an original pressed metal ceiling. The center hallway leads to a transverse hallway or lobby that fronts the theater's viewing room. Fixed in the west end of the transverse hall is a two-flight staircase that provides access to the balcony. The balcony seats and floor have been removed. Access to the second and third floors of the main block is provided by separate interior staircases.

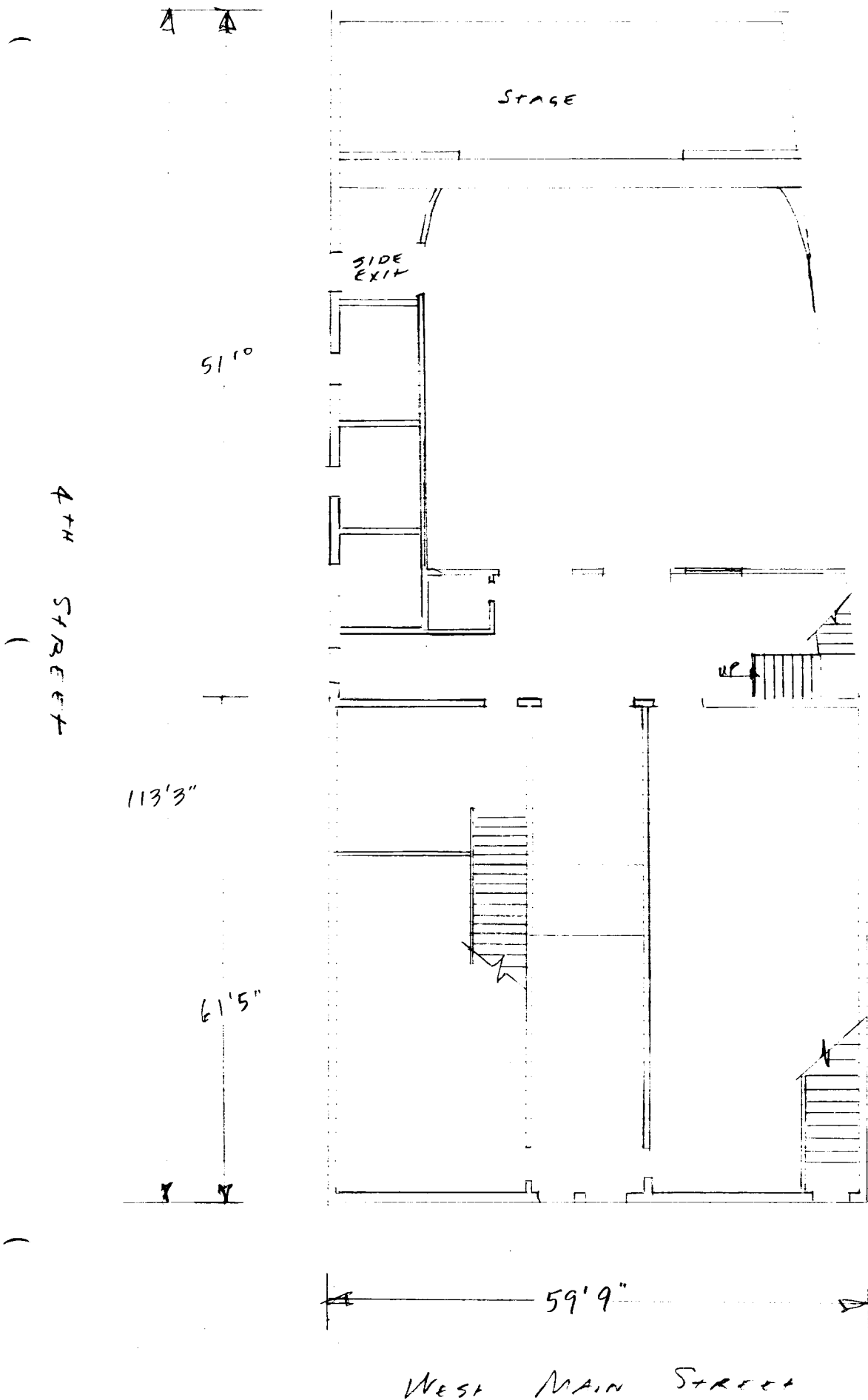
The viewing room of the theater is a large open space with side walls enhanced by pastel landscape murals alternated with large flock cloth panels. The ceiling, one of the most dynamic and decorative interior features, is comprised of a large-scale coffered design executed with classical motifs of pressed metal. Framing the elevated stage is a pair of decorated pilasters that rise to an entablature enriched with classical forms as well.

The second and third floors of the main block are simply finished, and most of the original detail has been removed or obscured by later alterations.

ARCADE THEATER

CRISFIELD, MARYLAND
NO SCALE

S-306



S-306
Crisfield Arcade
Crisfield
private

c. 1930

The Crisfield Arcade is a large, prominent building located in the center of "uptown" Crisfield. In 1928 the old Opera House, a Victorian brick structure, burned in a town fire that started within the Opera House during an 8:30 P.M. showing of "Love," starring John Gilbert and Greta Garbo. In the place of the Opera House, the Crisfield Arcade was erected in yellowish brick with slight references to the Art Deco style. The north elevation is divided by four plain pilasters topped by stone ball finials. The doubled or tripartite windows are bordered by a dark liver-colored brick.

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. S-306

Magi No. 2003065811

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Crisfield Arcade

and/or common

2. Location

street & number South Side of West Main Street ☐ not for publication

city, town Crisfield ☐ vicinity of congressional district First

state Maryland county Somerset

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name

street & number telephone no.:

city, town state and zip code

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Somerset Clerk of Court liber

street & number Somerset County Courthouse folio

city, town Princess Anne state Maryland 21853

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. S-306

Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date of move _____

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Crisfield Arcade

The Crisfield Arcade stands on the southwest corner of West Main Street and 4th Street in the center of "uptown" Crisfield, Somerset County, Maryland. The three-story squarish yellow-brick theater faces north.

The stretcher bond brick theater is three bays across by three bays deep and topped by a slightly stepped parapet roof. The north elevation is a symmetrically balanced facade, however the first floor commercial front has been altered. A wood shingle eave has been added above display windows on both sides of the twin door theater entrance. Still intact is the metal theater awning held up by iron cables attached to the wall surface. The second and third floors are obviously divided into three bays by four plain pilasters which rise the full three stories and are capped by stone ball finials. The second floor fenestration consists of a center four-part window topped by an Islamic-type arch. The entire window is bordered by a dark liver-colored brick, while the pointed arch is highlighted again by lighter colored brick. Directly below the center second floor window is a decorative stone arch with comma-shaped sides that curve upward to visually support a keystone-shaped block. The flanking right and left bays are wider than the center bay and contain three-part multi-pane sash windows surrounded by the same liver-colored brick. Flanking each window is a decorative rectangle executed in the same dark red brick with sandstone-colored corner blocks. The third floor is distinguished by the word "ARCADE" set in light colored stone in the center bay, and to each side paired three over one sash windows are bordered by dark red brick. The liver-colored brick is also used as accent along the top of the building beneath the limestone capping.

The west side wall of the arcade is largely covered by an adjacent store building, while the east side is marked by an asymmetrical arrangement of paired and single multi-pane sash windows. The dark red brick is used as brick banding at the second floor level and as window lintel highlights. A side entrance covered by a small wood shingle hood is located in the southeastern corner.

Extending to the south of the main arcade building is the theater portion of the building consisting largely of non-descript common bond brick walls. A row of single-story one-room plan stepped parapet roof shops is located on the east side and are reported to have been speakeasies during the 1930's.

8. Significance

Survey No. S-306

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☐ local

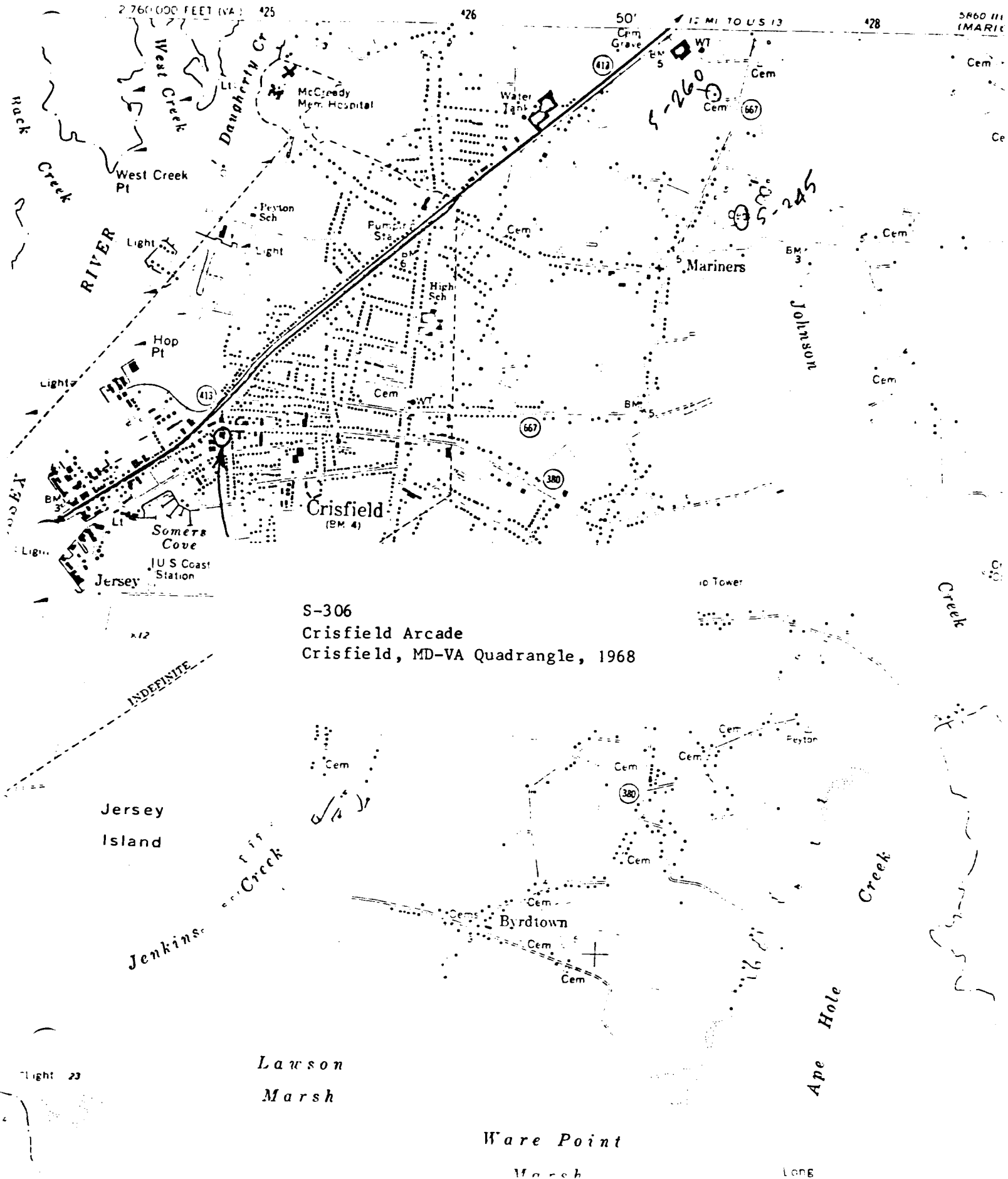
Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Crisfield Arcade is a large, prominent building located in the center of "uptown" Crisfield. In 1928 the old Opera House, a Victorian brick structure, burned from a town fire that started within the Opera House during an 8:30 P.M. showing of _____. In the place of the Opera House, the Crisfield Arcade was erected in yellow brick with slight references to the Art Deco style. The movie theater continued to operate until the early 1970's.

[illegible][illegible]

2 760 000 FEET (VA) : 425





Crisfield Arcade

S-306

Crisfield, Somerset Co., MD.

North elevation

6/85, Paul Touart, Photographer

Neg./MD. Hist. Trust

















3-315

C.

C.

Now

4/10 to

Not

from